

4 July 2007

Mr M Poole  
Headteacher  
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Blackhall Road  
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Dear Mr Poole

### Ofsted Monitoring of Schools with Notice to Improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 3 July 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I am also grateful to the chair of governors and the local authority for assistance with this visit.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

As a result of the inspection in December 2006, the school was asked to:

- raise standards throughout the school;
- ensure that pupils have clear and challenging targets for their current work as well as for the end of the year and the end of the Key Stage;
- improve the quality of teaching, planning and assessment;
- review the amount of time Key Stage 2 pupils spend in lessons and ensure that there is greater consistency in the time allocated for subjects across all classes.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement.

The school has responded purposefully to the issues identified at its previous inspection. The headteacher, supported by senior staff, has worked hard to introduce a new monitoring and evaluating schedule aimed at raising standards. The staff are responding positively to advice and guidance from the local authority.

Pupils' work in lessons and in their books, together with the school's own assessment data, shows that their progress is accelerating. Unvalidated teacher assessments and national tests for 2007 indicate that increasing numbers of pupils are on course to reach nationally expected standards at age seven and 11 and that their achievement is improving. This is because the school has successfully introduced several new strategies to improve pupils' achievement. Senior teachers have ensured that teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 are now more accurate. Effective tracking systems to identify pupils who are underperforming are now in place. Whole-school targets are realistic and appropriately challenging. As a result, the school is better placed to judge how well the pupils are achieving, and to track their progress more effectively and plan appropriate support. There is a better understanding by staff of what pupils can do and what they need to learn next.

Procedures for assessing the effectiveness of the school's performance and for setting challenging targets for pupils are at an embryonic stage but are beginning to improve classroom practice. Reports from observations of lessons support the senior management team's view that pupils are more engaged in their learning, have greater awareness of how they can improve their work and are increasingly keen and enthusiastic to succeed. Although there is some inconsistency, overall targets are generally matched to the needs and abilities of different groups. Teachers are gaining in confidence in judging the level of pupils' work and in their understanding of how well pupils are achieving. Targets set for the whole school and for year groups are reviewed regularly. As a result, senior leaders are focused on raising achievement and have a clearer view of how well pupils are learning.

There have been improvements in teaching, including how well lessons are planned and how pupils' work is assessed. No inadequate teaching was observed. The teaching was mainly satisfactory and some of it was good. The better lessons had a brisk pace and achieved their objectives well. Key strengths were that the activities were well chosen, learning was fun and a shared experience. Questioning was effective in keeping pupils engaged and well motivated. For example, pupils in Year 1 enjoyed placing their hands on their heads when they correctly identified the use of a connective in a story. In classrooms, writing has a higher visual presence than at the time of the previous inspection. The use of writing frames and guidance has developed pupils' ability to write with confidence. The matching of work to meet the pupils' needs is also improving. Teachers are clearer in their knowledge of what pupils will learn and convey this message effectively at the beginning of lessons. Few pupils present barriers to learning. Their behaviour and positive attitudes only wane when they become less involved in the tasks and activities.

In some lessons, teachers' expectations were too low and planning sometimes failed to meet the needs of potentially higher achievers. This led

to a slower pace and pupils lost interest in their work. Where teaching was just satisfactory, too many worksheets were used. Activities were sometimes mundane. The range of teaching and learning styles remains narrow, teaching is too directed and pupils are not fully engaged in many of the activities. In a small number of lessons, gaps in the pupils' learning are evident. For example, some pupils have only a limited range of strategies to solve number problems.

Assessment procedures and the tracking of progress are improving but lack consistency in how the information is used to guide the teaching. There are examples of effective marking of pupils' work. However the use of developmental comments to help learners improve is at an early and inconsistent stage.

The school has undertaken a comprehensive review of the curriculum at Key Stage 2. As a result, there is a greater consistency in the balance of time spent in lessons and in the teaching of specific subjects.

The school has taken every opportunity to benefit from the advice and support from local authority advisers and consultants. The whole-school commitment to improvement and the positive way the school acts on this has strengthened its capacity to improve.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

Steve Isherwood  
Her Majesty's Inspector